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LEBANON:

Amal-Hizballah Clash Over Kidnapping

Amal's efforts to locate Lieutenant Colonel Higgins have triggered clashes with Hizballah, which could deeply polarize the Lebanese Shia community—probably to Hizballah's benefit.

[REDACTED] b3

b1, b3 Amal groups reportedly forced their way into several Hizballah and Iranian facilities around Tyre and have set up checkpoints on roads near Hizballah villages. Amal has arrested several Hizballah members, apparently fueling growing tension between the two Shia groups in West Beirut. [REDACTED] b3

b1, b3 [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The kidnapping of Higgins near Tyre—an area ostensibly under Amal control—illustrates the decline of the once-dominant organization's political influence. Even though Amal militia chief Nabih Barril apparently is pushing hard to find Higgins, his clout in southern Lebanon probably is less than that of popular Tyre Amal militia leader Daud Daud, who resigned from Amal before rejoining it last year. If Higgins is still being held in southern Lebanon [REDACTED] b3 he almost certainly is in a Hizballah village and probably beyond the grasp of Amal forces, even those loyal to Daud. [REDACTED] b3

Continuing clashes between the two Shia groups could well favor Hizballah. It has been providing substantial economic aid and social welfare programs to the southern Shia, effectively giving it a political advantage over the financially strapped Amal militia. [REDACTED] b3

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